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## A LETTER TO A SON IN CAMP.

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MY DEAR SON: It may have seemed strange to you that a professing Christian father, so freely gave you, a Christian son, to enlist in the volunteer service. My reason was that I regarded this as a purely-defensive war. Not only did the Southern Confederacy propose to adjust the pending difficulties by peaceful and equitable negotiations, but Virginia used again and again the most earnest and noble efforts to prevent a resort to the sword. These overtures having been proudly spurned, and our beloved South having been threatened with invasion and subjugation, it seemed to me that nothing was left us but stern resistance or abject submission, to unconstitutional power. A brave and generous people could not for a moment hesitate between such alternatives. A war in defence of our homes and firesides—of our wives and children—of all that makes life worth possessing, is the result. While I most deeply deplored the necessity for the sacrifice, I could not but rejoice that I had a son to offer to the service of the country, and if I had a dozen, I would most freely give them all. As you are now cheerfully enduring the hardships of the camp, I know you will listen to a father's suggestions touching the duties of your new mode of life.

1. Take special care of your health. More soldiers die of disease than in battle. A thin piece of damp sponge in the crown of your hat during exposure to the hot sun—the use of thick shoes and a water-proof coat in rainy weather—the practice of drinking cold water when you are very warm as slowly as you sip hot tea—the thorough mastication of your food—the avoiding of damp tents and damp grounds during sleep—and frequent ablutions of your person, are all the hints I can give you on this point. Should you need anything that I can supply, let me hear from you. I will do what I

can to make you comfortable. After all you must learn to endure hardness as a good soldier. Having never slept a single night in your whole life except in a pleasant bed, and never known a scarcity of good food, you doubtless find the ways of the camp rough; but never mind. The war, I trust will soon be over, and then the remembrance of your hardships will sweeten the joy of peace.

2. The rules of war require prompt and unquestioning obedience. You may sometimes think the command arbitrary and the officer supercilious, but it is yours to obey. An undisciplined army is a curse to its friends and a derision to its foes. Give your whole influence therefore, to the maintenance of lawful authority and of strict order. Let your superiors feel assured that whatever they entrust to you will be faithfully done. Composed of such soldiers, and led by skilful and brave commanders, our army, by the blessing of God, will never be defeated. It is, moreover, engaged in a holy cause and must triumph.

3. Try to maintain your Christian profession among your comrades. I need not caution you against strong drink as useless and hurtful, nor against profanity, so common among soldiers. Both these practices you abhor. Aim to take at once a decided stand for God. If practicable have prayers regularly in your tent, or unite with your fellow-disciples in prayer-meetings in the camp. Should preaching be accessible, always be a hearer. Let the world know that you are a Christian. Read a chapter in the New Testament, which your mother gave you, every morning and evening, when you can, and engage in secret prayer to God for his holy Spirit to guide and sustain you. I would rather hear of your death than of the shipwreck of your faith and good conscience.

4. As you will come into habitual contact with men of every grade, make special associates only of these whose influence on your character is felt to be good. Some men love to tell extravagant stories—to indulge in vulgar wit, to exult in a swaggering carriage, to pride themselves on their coarse manners, to boast of their heroism, and to give utterance to feelings of revenge against the enemy. All this is injurious to young and impressible minds. If you admire such things, you will insensibly imitate them, and imitation will work grad-

ual but certain detriment to your character. Other men are refined without being affected. They can relax into occasional pleasantries without violating modesty. They can be loyal to their government, without indulging private hatred against her foes. They can be cool and brave in battle, and not be braggarts in the absence of danger. Above all they can be humble, spiritual and active Christians, and yet mingle in the stirring and perilous duties of soldier life. Let these be your companions and models. You will thus return from the dangers of camp without a blemish on your name.

5. Should it be your lot to enter into an engagement with the enemy, lift up your heart in secret ejaculations to the ever present and good Being that he will protect you from sudden death, or if you fall, that He will receive your departing spirit cleansed in the blood of Jesus, into his kingdom. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.—Commit your eternal interests, therefore, to the keeping of the Almighty Saviour. You should not, even in the hour of deadly conflict, cherish personal rage against the enemy, any more than an officer of the law hates the victim of the law. How often does a victorious army tenderly care for the dead and wounded of the vanquished. War is a tremendous scourge which Providence sometimes uses to chastise proud and wicked nations. Both parties must suffer, even though one may get the advantage. There is no occasion then for adding to the intrinsic evils of the system the odious feature of animosity to individuals. In the ranks of the foe are thousands of plain men who do not understand the principles for which we are struggling. They are deceived by artful demagogues into a posture of hostility to those whom, knowing, they would love. It is against such men that you may perhaps be arrayed, and the laws of war do not forbid you to pity them even in the act of destroying them. It is the more important that we should exhibit a proper temper in this unfortunate contest, because many professed Christians and ministers of the gospel at the North, are breathing out, in their very prayers and sermons, threatenings and slaughter against us. Oh! how painful that a gray-headed pastor should publicly exclaim, "*I would hang them as quick as I would shoot a mad dog.*"

6. Providence has placed you in the midst of thoughtless and unpardoned men. What a beautiful thing it would be if you could win some of them to the Saviour. Will you not try? You will have many opportunities of saying a word in season. The sick you may comfort—the wavering you may confirm—the back-sliden you may reclaim—the weary and heavy laden you may point to Jesus for rest to the soul. It is not presumptuous for a young man kindly and meekly to commend the gospel to his brother soldiers. The hardest of them will not repel a gentle approach, made in private. And many of them would doubtless be glad to have the subject introduced to them. They desire to hear of Jesus, but they lack courage to inquire of his people. An unusually large proportion of pious men have entered the army, and I trust they will give a new complexion to military life. Let them search out each other, and establish a fraternity among all the worshippers of God. To interchange religious views and administer brotherly counsel will be mutually edifying. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself."

And now, as a soldier has but little leisure, I will not occupy you longer. Be assured that every morning and evening we remember you, at the family altar, to our Father in Heaven. We pray for "a speedy, just and honorable peace," and for the safe return of all the volunteers to their loved homes. All the children speak often of "brother"—and hear your letters read with intense interest. That God Almighty may be your shield and your exceeding great reward, is the constant prayer of your loving father.

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